

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Maine Supreme Judicial Court is pleased to announce the formation of the Judicial Branch Business and Consumer Docket Advisory Committee to the Chief Justice (BCDAC).

BACKGROUND

In an effort to improve the delivery of prompt and consistent access to justice in complex, intermediate, and basic Business and Consumer civil cases, the Judicial Branch is working towards the establishment of the Business and Consumer Docket of the Maine State Court System.

Both Governor Baldacci and the 122nd Maine Legislature supported the creation of the Business and Consumer Docket, and sufficient resources were allocated to the Judicial Branch to allow the Docket to start up early in 2007. Accordingly, the Supreme Judicial Court expects to assign two trial judges and concomitant staff to serve as the resources of the Business and Consumer Docket as soon as the four additional judges authorized by the 122nd Maine Legislature are appointed and confirmed, which is expected to occur in January of 2007.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROLE

Prior to the implementation of the Business and Consumer Docket, the SJC will need to create procedures and policies for the operations of that Docket. The Business and Consumer Advisory Committee will make recommendations to the Chief Justice about the criteria for presumptive inclusion of particular case types in the Business and Consumer Docket and related dockets. In addition, the BCDAC will provide input concerning the mechanisms by which cases are filed and become a part of the BCD and related dockets and will serve as a resource to the Chief Justice as this new docket is implemented.

Members of the Advisory Committee have complementary experiences. Members come from all three branches of state government, as well as the Attorney General's Office. Also giving their time are: a university professor, a Maine State Bar Association representative, business people, consumer representatives, trial judges and attorneys with experience in complex, intermediate, and basic business litigation. [A complete list of members can be viewed at <http://www.courts.state.me.us/committees/index.html>].

After the first meeting of the Advisory Committee, Chief Justice Leigh I. Saufley said she was “impressed by the willingness of these busy professionals to give of their time to assist the State Court System in developing a new docket that will have the effect of allowing more expeditious resolution of business and consumer cases, and, by extension, other matters pending in the state courts.”

If you have comments or suggestions regarding the new Docket, you can contact the Court and the Advisory Committee through e-mail: BCD@maine.gov. For more information about the BCD, contact Laura M. O’Hanlon, Project Manager, at 207-822-4286.